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H – 931

International Court of Justice

H0931 – 0001

H0931 – 0002

OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT OF TESTIMONY FOR THE DEFENSE OF ORGANIZATIONS, TAKEN BEFORE A COMMISSION APPOINTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL PURSUANT TO PARAGRAPH 4 OF THE ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL DATED 13 March 1946.

TUESDAY 4 June 1946.

COMMISSIONERS:

CAPTAIN JOSEPH TUBRIDY.

POLITICAL LEADERS

(The Commission convened at 1515 hours)

EDWARD WILLY MEYER-WENDEBORN, a witness, took the stand and testified as follows: *

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: Raise your right hand and repeat after me (the oath:) I swear by God, the Almighty and Omniscient, that I will speak the pure truth and will withhold and add nothing.

(The witness repeated the oath)

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: Be seated, please.

~~COLONEL GRIFFITH-JONES: I wonder if I might interrupt for a moment. I know there is considerable difficulty in getting witnesses, especially today, but I would like to ask if we could follow the order of witnesses shown on this list, subject to any witness, ofcourse, having to be taken out. We have this witness who is not in the line on the list. The witness according to the list is Schliecker, who is called or to be called on behalf of the Leadership Corps. Instead of Schliecker we leave him out for no apparent reason, which makes it difficult.~~

~~DR. BERGES: (representing the above defendant) The defense was not prepared for that questioning, but was prepared concerning the ques-~~

~~tioning of Meyer-Wendeborn.~~

~~CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: I think we can arrange for that later on.~~

~~COLONEL GRIFFITH-JONES: I am not complaining, but I would like to carry out the correct procedure.~~

~~CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: Yes, it is new to me, but it came up suddenly. When they~~ we ~~do have to change these witnesses around, they~~ we ~~should let the prosecution know about it.~~

BY DR. BERGES:

Q I would like to ask some personal questions first of the witness. When were you born?

A 24 June 1891.

Q Where?

A Hamburg.

Q Give me your education very briefly?

A I schooled in Hamburg. Then the diplomat group in Wismar, Mecklenburg, three years business apprenticeship in Berlin, until the beginning of the World War. Employed in business, corresponding mainly. From 1914 to 1919 soldier during the first World War. Later on again as business employed by my father. Since 1922 in Oldenburg, manager of a wine firm.

Q Thank you, that is enough. When did you enter the Party?

A August 1932.

Q Were you active politically before that?

A Never.

Q Why did you join the National Socialist Party?

A At that time I attended a mass meeting for the first time, and I thought that this Party would be capable of changing the conditions in which Germany was at that time.

Q How long were you Political Leader?

A I was Political Leader from 19 April 1933 until the end.

Q Briefly give us your offices?

A 19 April 1933 to 13 October 1934, Ortsgruppenleiter in Essen, in Oldenburg.

Q After that?

A From 14 October 1934 until the end Kreisleiter in the Kreis in Kloppenburg.

Q Did you in the meantime lead another Kreis?

A At times I represented the Kreisleiter of Vechta, during training, and that was when I was called into the Army.

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A For the first years I had solely an expense account, but later on, or in later years I was employed officially, and had to give up my business.

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Q The regular discussions between the Kreisleiters and the Political Leaders, as stated by the prosecution to be proof of a conspiracy; what discussions that were repeated did you as Kreisleiter order or join in?

A I had weekly discussions with the members of the Kreisstab, or Kreis Staff, and the local administration, and had discussions with the mayors, and the Ortsgruppenleiter about every four to six weeks.

Q During the meetings of the Kreisstaff, what was discussed?

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LT HARRIS: Now I am going to object to that question which is asking for a different answer to that which is perfectly clear, and now

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A We could never require the lower Political Leaders to do what was supposed to have been requested from them according to the Organization Book.

Q You just said, "What was supposed to have been done." Did you ever read the Organization Book, which was already in its sixth edition?

A I just heard about the contents of the Organization Book here while we were exchanging information. While I was Kreisleiter I did receive, or had received the Organization Book regularly, but I never studied it, and I never made it a phase of my work.

Q Why was the Book not made as your official basis for your work. Was it not an official order?

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A The actual book dictated, according to that, what was to be done in the organization below us, and if we wanted to win and keep our principles, we could not give stray orders like that.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: Shall we take a recess.

(Recess)

~~CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: We may proceed.~~

BY DR. BERGES:

Q Was there in the practical carrying out of work in the Kreisleiter and in the Gau, one single interpretation for the term "Hoheitstraeger," Party official.

A There were three socalled Party officials, i.e. the Gauleiter, the Kreisleiter, and the Ortsgruppenleiter, and they were the three men to whom this term applied.

Q Then if I have understood you correctly, Blockleiter and Zellenleiter were not included in the application of this term?

A We never considered the Blockleiter and Zellenleiter as Party officials..

Q Do you know of any expressed orders issued by the deputy of the Fuehrer in this respect?

A It had been intended to make the Blockleiter and the Zellenleiter socalled similar high Party officials after the necessary personnel was at the disposal to carry out such an order.

Q You understand my question? You said that in ~~principle~~ practice the

the Blockleiter and the Zellenleiter were not considered high Party officials. My question was as to whether this practice was not due to corresponding instructions that had been issued by the Fuehrer?

A The higher Nazi Party channels considered the Blockleiter and the Zellenleiter like higher Nazi officials, but they never carried out this function.

Q Do you mean to say that the Organization Book considered them high Party leaders?

A Yes, I believe that was called for in the Organization Book.

Q I have here an order issued by the deputy of the Fuehrer, on 25 October 1934, in which it says that the political leadership lie alone in the hands of my representatives, my representatives being the Ortsgruppenleiter, the Kreisleiter, and the Gauleiter. Doesn't the quotation of this contain a summary of the contents of the matter ?

COLONEL GRIFFITH-JONES: Is the letter to be put in, or is it in already?

DR. BERGES: It is going to be submitted.

Q The organization book speaks of a staff and of a staff leadership and of a so-called sphere of interest as referred to the certain rights and police authority. Was there any such thing in practise?

A No, not in my office.

Q Do you know if this was the case in Northern Germany? In your ~~Hoheitzgebiet~~ Oldenburg district for example?

A Not in general. When we had discussions with our comrades at meetings, etc., we always realized very closely that the term "blockleiter" and "zellenleiter" applied as a high party leader term was only a dream.

Q What was the tasks of the "blockleiter" and "zellenleiter"?

A The~~se~~ir primary task was to see that the dues were handed in, they had to prepare for meetings, they had to organize money collections in their block, they had to keep the membership lists in order, that is for peace time. During war time a number of extra and additional cares were entrusted to them and this work was of a character they shared with the members and the administration of the NSV, the welfare organization, the women's workers organization, etc., but they never had a staff.

Q Could they employ the SS or the SA?

A No, not even the Hoheitzgebiet was able to do so.

Q Could they carry out arrests?

A No, they could not.

Q Could they confiscate property?

A No.

Q Would I represent their work correctly if I were to say that essentially their work consisted of running errands?

A My best answer to that would possibly be the popular saying that they were called errand boys, door knob cleaners and stairs runners, etc.

Q Were the blockleiters and zellanleiters used to spy on the population?

A I, myself, never issued such instructions to them.

Q Do you know if in other places the blockleiters and zellenleiters were employed for such work.

A I did not hear of such activity in our Gau.

Q Was ~~their~~ there any instruction issued which you might say was opposed or contrary to a spying activity?

A Yes, for example, if a party member or a German felt that he had been attacked or insulted or slandered, or did not know what it was all about, he thought he had best go to the blockeiter and tell him all about it.

Q You misunderstood my question. I asked if there were any regulations or instructions from higher party authorities that forbade the blockleiter and zellenleiter to carry out spying activities, but on the other hand to try to get the faith and confidence of the population. Spying and snifling into other people's business was strictly forbidden - that was never allowed.

Q I have here another regulation issued by the Deputy of the Fuehrer on October 5, 1936, Document 2639 PS, in which it says, "The blockleiter or zellenleiter may never try to press their services upon the members or the people in taking care of their welfare and taking care of the population. They must never turn to spying and prying into other peoples business. Such measures would not raise confidence, but rather distrust." Does this correspond to what was being carried out in practice?

A Yes. It corresponded to what was carried on in practice.

Q Did the blockleiter and the zellenleiter have any so-called files on opposition members of the party?

A No, they never had any such opposition files.

Q I shall now go on to another matter. As far as is known of practices in Northern Germany, may one speak of a united corps of political leaders?

A No, one cannot.

Q Why not?

A There was too big a change in the people who headed these positions and all the out~~t~~er signs for this were lacking.

Q Did you not distinguish two different groups within the corps of political leaders, the political side and those who were charged with the factual department side of the so-called political leaders and so-called special offices.

A Yes, there were leadership offices, welfare offices and the special offices.

Q Can you mention the leadership offices and the special departments?

A The leadership offices were composed of the organization propaganda personnel matters and the staff office, also the training office. The special welfare organization would include the DAV, the labor front, the peasants department, the office for civil servants, the office for education, the NS Women's Organization and the legal offices.

Q What is included in the special department?

A The NSV or the National Welfare organization, the NSKOV, the war veterans organization; the Public Health Office; Municipal politics; economical office; the training, industrial and technical offices.

Q Were the chiefs of these special departments that you just mentioned responsible for the political training and the phychology of the life that these people were to follow?

A No.

Q Whose task was this?

A The training office had to do this.

Q Which training office do you mean?

A The training office of the party.

Q There was for example a training office of the solicitor's organization or for civil servants. What sort of training did these offices of these departments have to carry out?

A They were subordinate to the training office of the party and acted according to directives and instructions handed to them in order to relieve the main training office.

Q Was there not a distinction between factual and [illegible] philosophical training?

A Yes, there was.

Q Would you say that this would correspond to the tasks of these different training offices of the political office and special department offices?

A Besides this propaganda training, there was also a political training. The political training was the work of the party. We had nothing to do with the professional training.

Q Did you resign church membership?

A Yes, in 1938 I resigned my church membership.

Q Why? For what reason?

A Throughout my life I had no binding, no religious binding whatsoever and the behaviour of the Protestant church in recent years was such that I considered my membership superfluous.

Q Were you asked by the party to resign church membership?

A No, I was not asked to resign my church membership.

Q Did you request any of your subordinates or any political leaders, who were known to you, to resign their church membership?

A No, I never did so.

Q Did political leaders have within their distrizts a so-called freedom of conscience in church matters?

A Yes, the people who were subordinate to me, as far as I could judge from the Gau, had absolute free-will control in these matters. Several times men who could not come to peace with their own conscience asked me about these matters. I always told them I did not ask for their church resignation, but that they should make their own decision of their own free will.

Q Were there higher professional group leaders who were members of the party?

A Yes, quite a number.

Q What was your relation to the clergy?

COLONEL JONES: We have listened to the religious views of this particular witness for some time. It is irrelevant to hear the views and activities of one person only and it does nothing to show the nature of the organization in general.

DR. AUGUST BERGES: The prosecution has accused the corps of political leaders of church persecution. This witness is testifying as to the Northern German districts.

COLONEL JONES: He is not testifying to the Northern German District if he answers the question as to what was his personal attitude to the church leaders or the church.

DR. AUGUST BERGES: This answer was to contain his instructions to the political leaders, who were subordinate to him.

H0931-0014

COLONEL JONES: Perhaps we can have the question in that form. The question in that particular form has the additional advantage of saving some ten minutes time for the witness to explain his personal attitude.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: Do you understand the point, Dr. Berges?

DR. BERGES: Yes, I understand the point.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: Will you then have your questions directed to the witness to show the policy of the political leaders rather than to show the policy or attitude of this particular witness?

DR. BERGES: Yes, I will.

BY DR. BERGES:

Q What instructions did you give your subordinate political leaders concerning their relationship to the church?

A I always asked that their relationship to the church should be a good one in our districts. I did not tolerate any steps against the church and if any differences of opinion should have arisen, these were to be clarified in conversation with the local clergy.

Q Were church and religious organizations in your district prohibited or prevented from carrying out their activities in any way?

A No. I not only kept a large number of church institutions, but left them within the organization of the church.

Q For example?

A Confession kindergarten of children and religious groups were tolerated. They remained under the administration of Catholic nuns and Catholic schools of home economics were allowed to remain. Until the very end an asylum for mentally deprived children was retained under the management of Catholic nuns. The same is true of hospitals that were managed by the clergy until the very end.

Q Can you above and beyond what you have just stated give any examples of religious advancement or help given by political leaders within your territory?

A If any member of the clergy ever came to me and spoke to me about processions and exercises or services that were going to be carried on by them that were to be held at the same time as party meetings, we always came to an agreement. At one time the clergy would have to postpone their meetings and another time we would have to postpone our meeting.

Q In 1936, a common school was introduced in Germany and there was a so-called emblem decree. At that time, what was the attitude of the political leaders concerning this decree in your Catholic district?

A We were opposed to the removal of religious emblems from school rooms. We said this to our Gauleiter in no uncertain terms and we were able to induce him, together with the population, to retract this decree that had been issued by the Minister of State Paoli.

Q Was the decree issued by the Reichs Main Security Office forbidding early masses, after there had been an air-raid at night, carried out in your district?

A I saw to it that this decree was not carried out by closing a blind eye and made attempts to have the decree retracted, but unfortunately I succeeded only after some time.

Q Another matter. Which concentration camps did you know about?

A By name I knew of Esterwegen, Dachau and Oranienburg.

Q Did you ever inspect a concentration camp?

A No, I never visited any concentration camps. I once expressed a desire to do so, but was told that this would not be allowed at Esterwegen and if I wanted to make such a visit, I should get the approval of the Reichs Main Security Office.

Q What answer did you receive from the Camp Commandant at Esterwegen?

~~A~~ COLONEL JONES: I rise again to object. This question whether or not this witness ever visited a concentration camp is wholly irrelevant, so also is the answer that the witness may or may not have requested to ~~his request to~~ visit a concentration camp. It has no bearing upon the question as to the aims of the organization as a whole.

DR. BERGES: The organization is accused of participating in or having general knowledge of events in concentration camps. The answer of the witness, which I do not want to suggest to him, but which I know refers to a group of political leaders, is as far as I know, not only concerns himself but these leaders.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: That is the point. The fact that he as an individual was not aware of the fact is very small proof of what the organization knew was going on. What you should bring out is not whether this witness was allowed or not allowed in concentration camps, or if he had knowledge of what was going on in concentration camps, but what ~~was the policy of~~ applied to the political leaders.

DR. BERGES: That is what I want to have the witness testify to by the questions I am going to ask him. The answer which the witness received from the Commandant at Esterwegen did not refer to the witness himself personally and from these premises I want to argue my point of the group of political leaders.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: Very well.

Q Did you receive the following answer from the commandant at Esterwegen, that he could not understand what interest a political leader would have in visiting or inspecting a concentration camp?

A Yes. The words he used were that he could not imagine what a Kreisleiter wanted to do in the Concentration Camp Esterwegen.

Q This is the general answer to the question I wanted to ask. Did you satisfy yourself with this answer?

A I reported the incident to the Gau leadership and the answer I received from the Gau leadership was that I should let the matter rest, as we would not obtain anything there and it was a matter for the Reichs Main Security Office.

Q Did you receive official or unofficial information about the Concentration Camps from any other sources.

A No, we never received any information.

Q Could you not exert influence on the behaviour, for example, of the SS who took care of the guarding of concentration camps through higher party channels?

A No, that would not have shown any possbbility of success, as the SS would not accept any instructions from us.

Q Will you explain the word "us" more definitely. Do you also mean higher political officers?

A By "us" I mean everything that styled itself political leadership.

Q Did this vain glory of the SS also express itself in the police field?

A We did not have the SS as a police organization, but if you mean the

Gestapo or the Security Service, the same is true of them.

Q No, I refer to other cases. Did the SS take a hand, or did the SS make it their business to take part in the arrests of men for whom political leaders had interceded.

A No, in general the SS decided they were not interested in the fact whether we interceded for a person or not. Once after I had written an appeal for clemency for an inmate of a concentration camp, I received the answer from the camp commandant that he did not yet consider the inmate to have sufficiently improved to be given clemency.

Q Did Esterwegen guards take part in any excesses against which the part afterward objected?

A Yes, there was one such case in a village of my district called Loningen. Once during a fall festival, guards of Esterwegen appeared who were slightly intoxicated and pulled away religious emblems from certain people. The mayor employed his police force, which was powerless and complaints by the Obergruppenfuehrer were also unsuccessful. The Landrat called me by phone and wanted my approval for employing the police force of Oldenburg in order to bring about order. I gave my consent and an Oldenburg police group was sent to Loningen. The people were arrested and taken off to Oldenburg. The Reichs fuehrer SS appeared or interceded immediately and demanded the immediate release of these guards and the release took place immediately. For many years afterward the landrat concerned here was persecuted by the Reichsfuehrer SS. The landrat applied for transfer and finally asked for his resignation, but only at the very end the Gauleiter and also the prime minister of Oldenburg helped the landrat and he remained in office.

H0931 - 0019

Q In 1933, there was a case in Northern Germany that aroused general attention, in which the political leadership is supposed to have interceded for the people who had refused to give their oath. Can you give a brief description of this case concerning what is considered essential relative to the corps of political leaders?

A Rural riding clubs were transferred to the SS upon Hindenberg's death and they were to be sworn in for Adolf Hitler. The leader of the standard, who was well aware of the peculiarities of our population told them before, they were distinctly to think it over, whether they wanted to make any such an oath or not. There upon eleven boys resigned and afterwards were arrested for having refused to take the oath. The political leadership interceded for these boys and was successful in bringing about their release, but the Reichsfuehrer SS decreed their renewed arrest and transfer to a concentration camp. We again interceded for these boys. One of my comrades, a political leader and wearer of the honor badge, went to the Reichsfuehrer personally on the occasion of the party rally in order to obtain the release of these boys in the names of their parents. The Reichsfuehrer was very short with him and was very surprised that a bearer of the honor badge would intercede for people who had refused to give their oath. We continued in our endeavors and after a period of time were finally successful for these boys. These boys were expressedly told that they were to consider whether they wanted to take the oath or not and if they considered the oath in the form in which it existed too strong.

Q How long were the boys in the Concentration Camp.

A I don't remember exactly, but about five or six months.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: We will adjourn until tomorrow.

(COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 1700 HOURS.)

The foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the testimony of EDWARD WILLY MEYER-WENDERBORN taken on 4 June 1946

C J Gallagher
Reporter (pp 1 - 7)

Alice Meehan
Reporter (pp 8 - 18)

CERTIFIED TO:

Joseph F Tubridy
Commisioner

H0931 - 0021

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H0931 - 0024

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Q Then if I have understood you correctly, Blockleiter and Zellenleiter were not included in the application of this term?

A We never considered the Blockleiter and Zellenleiter as Party officials.

Q Do you know of any expressed orders issued by the deputy of the Fuehrer in this respect?

A It had been intended to make the Blockleiter and the Zellenleiter so-called similar high Party officials after the necessary personnel was at the disposal to carry out such an order.

Q You understand my question? You said that in practice the Blockleiter and the Zellenleiter were not considered high Party officials. My question as to whetherthis practice was not due to corresponding instructions that had been issued by the Fuehrer?

A The higher Nazi Party channels considered the Blockleiter and the Zellenleiter like higher Nazi officials, but they never carried out this function.

Q Do you mean to say that the Organization Book considered them high Party leaders?

A Yes, I believe that was called for in theOrganization Book.

Q I have here an order issued by the deputy of the Fuehrer, on 25 October 1934, in which it says that the political leadership lie alone in the hands of my representatives, my representatives being the Ortsgruppen leiter, the Kreisleiter, and the Gauleiter. Doesn't the quotation of this contain a summary of the contents of the matter?

COLONEL GRIFFITH JONES: Is the letter to be put in, or is it in already?

DR. BERGES: It is going to be submitted.

Q The organization book speaks of a staff and of a staff leadership and of a so-called sphere of interest as referred to the certain rights and police authority. Was there any such thing in practise?

A No, not in my office.

Q Do you know if this was the case in Northern Germany? In you Oldenburg district for example?

A Not in general. When we had discussions with our comrades at meetings etc., we always realized very closely that the term "blockleiter" and "zellenleiter" applied as a high party leader term was only a dream.

Q What was the tasks of the "blockleiter" and "zellenleiter"?

A Their primary task was to see that the dues were handed in, they had to prepare for meetings, they had to organize money collections in their block, they had to keep the membership lists in order, that is for peace time. During war time a number of extra and additional cares were entrusted to them and this work was of a character they shared with the members and the administration of the NSV, the welfare organization, the women's workers organization, etc., but they never had a staff.

Q Could they employ the SS or the SA?

A No, not even the Hoheitzgebiet was able to do so.

Q Could they carry out arrests?

A No, they could not.

Q Could they confiscate property?

A No.

Q Would I represent their work correctly if I were to say that essentially their work consisted of running errands?

A My best answer to that would possibly be the popular saying that they were called errand boys, door knob cleaners and stairs runners, etc.

Q Were the blockleiters and zellanleiters used to spy on the population

A I, myself, never issued such instructions to them.

Q Do you know if in other places the blockleiters and sellenleiters were employed for such work?

A I did not hear of such activity in our Gau.

Q Was there any instruction issued which you might say was opposed or contrary to a spying activity?

A Yes, for example, if a party member or a German felt that he had been attacked or insulted or slandered, or did not know what it was all about, he thought he had best go to the blockleiter and tell him all about it.

Q You misunderstood my question. I asked if there were any regulations or instructions from higher party authorities that forbade the blockleiter and zellenleiter to carry out spying activities, but on the other hand to try to get the faith and confidence of the population. Spying and snifling into other people's business was strictly forbidden - that was never allowed.

Q I have here another regulation issued by the Deputy of the Fuehrer on October 5, 1936, Document 2639 PS, in which it says, "The Blockleiter or zellenleiter may never try to press their services upon the members or the people in taking c are of their welfare and taking care of the population. They must never turn to spying and prying into other peoples business. Such measures would not raise confidence, but rather distrust." Does this correspond to what was being carried out in practice?

A Yes. It corresponded to what was carried on in practice.

Q Did the blockleiter and the zellenleiter have any so-called files on opposition members of the party?

A No, they never had any such opposition files.

Q I shall now go on to another matter. As far as is known of practices in Northern Germany, may one speak of a united corps of political leaders?

A No, one cannot.

Q Why not?

A There was too big a change in the people who headed these positions and all the outer signs for this were lacking.

Q Did you not distinguish two different groups within the corps of political side and those who were charged with the factual department side of the so-called political leaders and so-called special offices.

A Yes, there were leadership offices, welfare offices and the special offices.

Q Can you mention the leadership offices and the special departments?

A The leadership offices were composed of the organization propaganda personnel matters and the staff office, also the training office. The special welfare organization would include the DAV, the labor front, the peasants department, the office for civil serva nts, the office for education, the NS Women's Organization and the legal offices.

Q What is included in the special department?

A The NSV or the National Welfare Organization, the NSKOV, the war veterans organization; the Publice Health Office; Municipal politics; economical office; the training, industrial and technical offices.

Q Were the chiefs of these special departments that you just mentioned responsible for the political training and the psychology of the life that these people were to follow?

A- No.

Q Whose task was this?

A. The training office had to do this.

Q. Which training office do you mean ?

A. The training office of the party.

Q. There was for example a training office of the solicitor's organization or for civil servants. What sort of training did these offices of these departments have to carry out ?

A. They were subordinate to the training office of the party and acted according to directives and instructions handed to them in order to relieve the main training office.

Q. Was there not a distinction between factual and philosophical training ?

A. Yes, there was.

Q. Would you say that this would correspond to the tasks of these different training offices of the political office and special department offices ?

A. Besides this propaganda training, there was also a politic training. The political training was the work of the party. We had nothing to do with the professional training.

Q. Did you resign church membership ?

A. Yes, in 1938 I resigned my church membership.

Q. Why ? For what reason ?

A. Throughout my life I had no binding, no religious binding whatsoever and the behaviour of the Protestant church in recent years was such that I considered my membership superfluous.

Q. Were you asked by the party to resign church membership ?

A. No, I was not asked to resign my church membership .

Q. Did you request any of your subordinates or any political leaders, who were known to you, to resign their church membershi

A. No, I never did so.

Q. Did political leaders have within their districts a so-called freedom of conscience in church matters ?

A. Yes, the people who were subordinate to me, as far as I could judge from the Gau, had absolute free-will control in these matters. Several times men who could not come to peace with their own conscience asked me about these matters. I always told them I did not ask for their church resignation, but that they should make their own decision of their own free will.

Q. Were there higher professional group leaders who were members of the party ?

A. Yes, quite a number.

Q. What was your relation to the clergy ?

COLONEL JONES: We have listened to the religious views of this particular witness for some time. It is irrelevant to hear the views and activities of one person only and it does nothing to show the nature of the organization in general.

DR. AUGUST BERGES: The prosecution has accused the corps of political leaders of church persecution, This witness is testifying as to the Northern German districts.

COLONEL JONES: He is not testifying to the Northern German District if he answers the question as to what was his personal attitude to the church leaders or the church.

DR. AUGUST BERGES: This answer was to contain his instructions to the political leaders, who were subordinate to him.

COLONEL JONES: Perhaps we can have the question in that form. The question in that particular form has the additional advantage of saving some ten minutes time for the witness to explain his personal attitude.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: Do you understand the point, Dr. Berges?

DR. BERGES: Yes, I understand the point.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: Will you then have your questions directed to the witness to show the policy of the political leaders rather than to show the policy or attitude of this particular witness ?

DR. BERGES: Yes, I will.

BY DR. BERGES:

Q. What instructions did you give your subordinate political leaders concerning their relationship to the church ?

A. I always asked that their relationship to the church should be a good one in our districts. I did not tolerate any steps against the church and if any differences of opinion should have arisen, these were to be clarified in conversation with the local clergy.

Q. Were church and religious organizations in your district prohibited or prevented from carrying out their activities in any way ?

A. No. I not only kept a large number of church institutions, but left them within the organization of the church.

Q. For example ?

A. Confession kindergarten of children and religious groups were tolerated. They remained under the administration of Catholic nuns and Catholic schools of home economics were allowed to remain. Until the very end an asylum for mentally deprived children was retained under the management of Catholic nuns. The same is ture of hospitals that were managed by the clergy until the very end.

Q. Can you above and beyond what you have just stated give any examples of religious advancement or help given by political leaders within your territory ?

A. If any member of the clergy ever came to me and spoke to me about processions and exercises or services that were going to be carried on by them that were to be held at the same time as party meetings, we always came to an agreement. At one time the clergy would have to postpone their meetings and another time we would have to postpone our meeting.

Q. In 1936, a common school was introduced in Germany and there was a so/called emblem decree. At that time, what was the attitude of the political leaders concerning this decree in your Catholic district ?

A. We were opposed to the removal of religious emblems from school rooms. We said this to our Gauleiter in no uncertain terms and we were able to induce him, together with the population, to retract this decree that had been issued by the Minister of State Paoli.

Q. Was the decree issued by the Reichs Main Security Office forbidding early masses, after there had been an air-raid at night, carried out in your district ?

A. I saw to it that this decree was not carried out by closing a blind eye and made attempts to have the decree retracted, but unfortunately I succeeded only after some time.

Q. Another matter. Which concentration camps did you know about ?

A. By name I knew of Esterwegen, Dachau and Oranienburg.

Q. Did you ever inspect a concentration camp ?

A. No, I never visited any concentration camps. I once expressed a desire to do so, but was told that this would not be allowed at Esterwegen and if I wanted to make such a visit, I should get th approval of the Reichs Main Security Office.

Q. What answer did you receive from the Camp Commandant at Esterwegen ?

COLONEL JONES: I rise again to object. This question whether or not this witness ever visited a concentration camp is wholly irrelevant, so also is the answer that the witness may or may not have requested to visit a concentration camp. It has no bearing upon the question as to the aims of the organization as a whole.

DR. BERGES: The organization is accused of participating in or having general knowledge of events in concentration camps. The answer of the witness, which I do not want to suggest to him but which I know refers to a group of political leaders, is as far as I know, not only concerns himself but those leaders.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: That is the point. The fact that he as an individual was not aware of the fact is very small proof of what the organization knew was going on. What you should bring out is not whether this witness was allowed or not allowed in concentration camps, or if he had knowledge of what was going on in concentration camps, but what applied to the political leaders.

DR. BERGES: That is what I want to have the witness testify to by the questions I am going to ask him. The answer which the witness received from the Commandant at Esterwegen did not refer to the witness himself personally and from these premises I want to argue my point of the group of political leaders.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: Very well.

Q. Did you receive the following answer from the Commandant at Esterwegen, that he could not understand what interest a political leader would have in visiting or inspecting a concentration camp ?

H0931 – 0033

H0931 - 0034

A. Yes. The words he used were that he could not imagine what a Kreisleiter wanted to do in the Concentration Camp Esterwegen.

Q. This is the general answer to the question I wanted to ask. Did you satisfy yourself with this answer ?

A. I reported the incident to the Gau leadership and the answer I received from the Gau leadership was that I should let the matter rest, as we would not obtain anything there and it was a matter for the Reichs Main Security Office.

Q. Did you receive official or unofficial information about the Concentration Camps from any other sources ?

A. No, we never received any information.

Q. Coul you not exert influence on the behaviour, for example, of the SS who took care of the guarding of concentration camps through higher party channels ?

A. No, that would not have shown any possibility of success, as the SS would not accept any instructions from us.

Q. Will you explain the word "us" more definitely. Do you also mean higher political officers ?

A. By "us" I mean everything that styled itself political leadership.

Q. Did this vain glory of the SS also express itself in the police field ?

A. We did not have the SS as a police organization, but if you mean the

Gestapo or the Security Service, the same is true of them.

Q No, I refer to other cases. Didthe SS take a hand, or did the SS make it their business to take part in the arrests ofmen for whom political leaders had interceded.

A No, in general the SS decided they were not interested in the fact whether we interceded for a person or not, Once after I had written an appeal for clemency for an inmate of a concentration camp, I received the answer from the camp commandant that he did not yet consider the inmate to have sufficientlyimproved to be given clemency.

Q Did Esterwegen guards take part in any excesses against which the part afterward objected?

A Yes, there was one such case in a village of my district called Leningen. Once during a fall festival, guards of Esterwegen appeared who were slightly intoxicated and pulled away religious emblems from certain people. The mayor employed his police force, which was powerless and complaints by the Obergruppenfuehrerwere also unsuccessful. The Landrat called me by phone and wanted my approval for employing the police force of Oldenburg in order to bring about order. I gave my consent and an Oldenburg police group was sent to Leningen. The people were arrested and taken off to Oldenburg. The Reichs fuehrer SS appeared or interceded immediately and demanded the immediate releaseof those guards and the release took place immediately. For many years afterward the Landrat concerned here was persecuted by the Reichsfuehrer SS. The Landrat applied for transfer and finally asked for his resignation but only at the very end the Gauleiter and also the prime minister of Oldenburg helped the Landrat and he remained in office.

Q In 1933, there was a case in Northern Germany that aroused general attention, in which the political leadership is supposed to have interceded for the people who had refused to give their oath. Can you give a brief description of this case concerning what is considered essential relative to the corps of political leaders?

A Rural riding clubs were transferred to the SS upon Hindenborg's death and they were to be sworn in for Adolf Hitler. The leader of the standard, who was well aware of the peculiarities of our population told them before, they were distinctly to think it over, whether they wanted to make any such an oath or not. Thereupon eleven boys resigned and afterwards were arrested for having refused to take theoath. The political leadership interceded for these boys and was successful in bringing about their release, but the Reichsfuehrer SS decreed their renewed arrest and transfer to a concentration camp. We again interceded for these boys. One of my comrades, a political leader and wearer of the honor badge, went to the Reichsfuehrer personally on the occasion of the party rally in order to obtain the release of these boys in the name of their parents. The Reichsfuehrer was very short with him and was very surprised that a bearer of the honor badge would intercede for people who had refused to give their oath. We continued in our endeavors and after a period of time were finally successful for these boys. These boys were expressedly told that they were to consider whether theywanted to take the oath or not and if they considered the oath in the form in which it existed too strong.

Q How long were the boys in the Concentration Camp.

A I don't remember exactly, but about five or six months.

CAPTAIN TUBRIDY: We will adjourn until tomorrow.

(COMMISSION ADJOURNED AT 1700 HOURS.)

The foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the testimony of EDWARD WILLY MEYER-WENDERBORN taken on 4 June 194

C. J. GALLAGHER
Reporter

ALICE MEEHAN
Reporter

JOSEPH F. TUBRIDY
Commissioner